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ABSTRACT

This report describes and evaluates Project SAIL, a collaborative project of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and the New York City Board of Education. It is an ungraded primary unit for children from ages five through eight located at Public School 41, District 23 in Brooklyn. The project stresses school-based planning and shared decision-making, rather than centralized planning, in the public schools. At the end of the program's first year, over 80 percent of the teachers believed that students' achievement and attitudes toward school had improved. Children showed improvement in social skills as measured by a child behavior rating scale. A larger percentage of children had attendance rates greater than 90 percent in 1987-88 than in 1986-87. On the Metropolitan Achievement Test, kindergarten children scored above grade level in language, and first graders scored below grade level in reading. At the end of the second year, the percentage of second and third graders reading at or above grade level increased from 25 percent to 36 and 39 percent, respectively. In the 1988-89 school year, 54 percent of second graders and 68 percent of third graders scored at or above grade level on the citywide mathematics test, while only a third of the students had done so the previous year. Several recommendations for program improvement are offered, and a list of five references is included. (BC)

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PROJECT SAIL: THE FIRST TWO YEARS
1987-88 and 1988-89

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SUMMARY

Project SAIL, a collaborative project of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and the New York City Board of Education, is an ungraded primary unit for children from ages five through eight located at P.S. 41, District 23 in Brooklyn. The first full-scale experiment in school-based planning and shared decision-making within the New York City public schools, the project was planned and managed by the teachers in cooperation with the school's administrators.

At the end of the program's first year, over 80 percent of the teachers believed that students' achievement had improved and that children had better attitudes toward school and learning. Children showed statistically significant improvement in social skills as measured by a Child Behavior Rating Scale administered by classroom teachers in February and June. Although there was only a slight improvement in overall attendance, a larger percentage of children had attendance rates greater than 90 percent in 1987-88 than in 1986-87. Kindergarten children scored slightly above grade level (56th percentile) in language and first-graders scored slightly below grade level in reading on the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) administered in the spring 1988.

The second year of the program the percentage of second and third grade students reading at or above grade level increased from 25 percent to 36 and 39 percent, respectively. In 1986-87, before the inception of Project SAIL, about a third of the second and third grade children scored at or above grade level on the citywide mathematics test. In contrast, in 1988-89, 54 percent of the second graders and 68 percent of the third grade students scored at or above grade level.

Based on the experiences of teachers and administrators at P.S. 41, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration as school-based planning and shared decision-making are expanded to other New York City public schools.

- School-based planning and shared decision-making cannot be imposed on schools. Administrators, parents and teachers must want to reorganize their schools and must be knowledgeable enough about the implications of reorganization to make an informed decision to participate.

- School administrators, teachers and parents may need extensive training and technical assistance in order for their reorganization efforts to be successful.

- Some schools may need several years in order to successfully execute especially innovative projects. Schools involved in school-based planning efforts must be allowed sufficient time to plan and implement their ideas.

- Schools will need sufficient funds committed over a long enough period of time to be able to carry out their ideas.

- Both central and community school district administrators will need training so that they can provide necessary leadership and support for school administrators, teachers, and parents.

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I. INTRODUCTION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project for Success and Achievement in Learning (Project SAIL) came about as the result of a proposal made by the president of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). At the UFT Spring Education Conference held in April 1986, the president called for teacher support for an alternative to the existing early grade organization which confines children to a prescribed curriculum that too often leads to early and persistent failure.

"Children should be taught as individuals," she urged, "with teachers sharing their knowledge with them and deciding when to move them on. The primary years should not be locked into year-long grade levels, nor should teachers be required to use prescribed texts or methodologies or programs they don't agree are right for children. We need a school system which capitalizes on the enormous talent and professional ability of its own staff," the president continued, "and which listens to the advice of those who are in a position to know--those in the classroom and in daily immediate contact with the children."

The UFT president approached the Chancellor of the New York City Board of Education, who agreed to cooperate in implementing the idea in at least two elementary schools beginning the following September. According to the New York Post (June 2, 1986), "Both sides agreed that an ungraded system is worth trying to see if it gives children a better grounding in the basics by the time they reach the fourth grade." Public School 41, located in Community School District 23 in Brooklyn, was one of two

schools* selected by the UFT and the Board of Education to develop a plan for an ungraded primary unit.

Like many other organizations, both the central Board of Education and the community school districts in the New York City public school system are centralized and "professionalized" bureaucracies. Professionals at the higher executive levels of the organization usually design policies and programs. Middle-level administrators transform them into guidelines and procedures which are carried out by school principals and teachers. Currently, many people argue that the top-down organizational structures created at the turn of the century are inadequate and outdated. They believe that if schools are to provide better instruction for children, the school system must be restructured so that school principals, teachers, and parents have more of a say in how their individual schools are run. In recent years, educators at every level have called for greater teacher input in decision-making as an important step toward empowering the profession and revitalizing the schools (OREA, 1989).

The United Federation of Teachers considered Project SAIL as much an experiment in school-based management and teacher decision-making as it was an effort to improve early grade instruction. P.S. 41 was selected by both the UFT and the Board of Education because of the positive long-term relationships

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*The second school, P.S. 38 in Brooklyn's District 15, began planning an ungraded primary unit in September 1988.

which were known to exist between teachers and administrators within the school.

In March 1987, 37 staff and administrators from P.S. 41, the UFT, and representatives from the Chancellor's office, attended a weekend retreat sponsored by the union to begin planning the new ungraded primary program. Teachers and administrators continued to meet to prepare a proposal and budget, which were submitted to the central Board of Education in May 1987.

Project SAIL began operation at P.S. 41 in September 1987. Funds for the project were provided through Project Child (a comprehensive citywide kindergarten and first grade program), Paraprofessionals in Kindergarten, (a City Council initiative which provided funds to pay educational assistants to work in kindergarten classrooms), and through special monies for planning from the central Board of Education.

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT DESCRIPTION

P.S. 41 is housed in a relatively new, well-maintained building that was first opened in September 1965. The school was named the Walter F. White Elementary School after the early civil rights activist and former national executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.). It is located in Community School District 23 in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville section of Brooklyn, one of New York City's poorest neighborhoods.

Twenty years ago, much of what is now District 23 was the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Demonstration School District, one of the

three districts established as demonstrations in community control in New York City in 1968 prior to decentralization of the entire New York City public school system. The district contains 14 elementary schools and four intermediate schools, and has a total student population of over 10,000 children. The majority of students (81.7 percent) are African-American, 17.8 percent are Hispanic, 0.4 percent are white, and 0.1 percent are Asian. Most students (86.3 percent) come from low-income families and are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch. Fourteen schools are eligible for federal Chapter I funds which provide monies for remedial instruction for educationally disadvantaged students in schools in low income communities.

In 1988-89, there were 877 students in P.S. 41, 81 percent of whom were eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch. Similar to the overall district population, 88 percent of the students were African-American and 12 percent were Hispanic. Only 15 students had limited proficiency in English. The overall school average daily attendance was 84 percent, which was below the Chancellor's Minimum Standards. In 1986-87, prior to Project SAIL, about half the third graders had reading scores below the state reference point, the minimum competency level established by the New York State Education Department for children in grades three and six.

In 1988-89, the school was staffed by 47 teachers, 30 of whom had worked at P.S. 41 for five years or more. A majority of the teachers (60 percent) had tenure, 25 percent were probationary teachers, while 15 percent were full-time

substitutes with temporary per diem licenses. The teaching staff was about 50 percent African-American and 50 percent white. There were thirteen instructional paraprofessionals assisting classroom teachers. The school principal had been at the school since 1972, two years after District 23 was created. Both the assistant principals had been teachers at P.S. 41 earlier in their careers.

THE EVALUATION STUDY

In December 1987 the project's school-based evaluation committee contacted the Early Childhood Evaluation Unit within the central Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA)* to request technical assistance in developing methods to assess student outcomes. As a result of their participation in ungraded primary classes, school staff expected that a) children would exhibit improved peer relationships and organizational skills, b) children would attend school more often, and c) teachers would be better able to identify children's individual skills and talents.

After several planning meetings between the evaluation committee, the UFT Educational Issues Assistant assigned to the project, and OREA staff, procedures were worked out for teachers to collect data on children's socialization skills and attendance. Because the children were administered standardized tests as part of the mandated Project Child Chapter I evaluation

*Formerly known as the Office of Evaluation and Assessment (O.E.A.).

and the citywide testing program, information about pupil achievement on these tests was included in the evaluation as well. At the end of the first year, teachers completed a questionnaire designed by OREA to collect information about their perceptions of the program. School staff submitted all data to OREA for analysis and interpretation.

In 1988-89, Project Giant Step prekindergarten classes were introduced at P.S. 41.* The school was included in OREA's study of continuity of programming for children and their parents as they move from prekindergarten into early elementary school grades. The study focused on school-based planning, professional development for all staff, parent participation, and continuity and coordination of activities in the early grades. An OREA consultant visited the school six times during April, May, and June 1988. During the site visits, she interviewed teachers, parents, and school administrators; attended selected school events; and collected documents related to the areas of focus. These data were analyzed by OREA's Early Childhood Evaluation Unit. Information about student achievement and attendance was obtained from central school system records.

The report which follows presents information about the school-based planning and shared decision-making process as it

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*Project Giant Step is a comprehensive half-day prekindergarten program for four-year-olds coordinated by the Mayor's Office of Early Childhood Education Unit. In addition to the educational program for children, the project provides supportive social and health services, intensive staff development, and parent involvement activities.

evolved at P.S. 41, as well as implementation of the ungraded primary unit designed by the staff over a two year period. Chapter II describes the school environment and procedures developed at P.S. 41 for school-based planning and shared decision-making. Chapter III discusses the ungraded primary unit designed and implemented by the school staff. Preliminary student outcome data are presented in the fourth chapter. The final chapter provides conclusions and recommendations.

II. SCHOOL-BASED PLANNING AND SHARED DECISION-MAKING AT P.S. 41

This chapter describes elements of the organizational environment that influenced implementation of school-based planning and shared decision-making within the school.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

School Climate

The school building which houses P.S. 41 was immaculate. Inside, the halls were attractively decorated. They were so quiet that teachers left their classroom doors open as they taught and the children worked undistracted. According to the teachers, discipline was not a major problem. They believed that their child-centered classrooms, in which every child could experience success, had been a major factor in reducing discipline problems. According to the teachers, "Our children are enjoying learning."

Staff Morale

Good staff morale was cited as one of the school's major strengths in the 1986 Comprehensive School Improvement Program (CSIP) plan. In the Project SAIL proposal, the teachers described themselves as the "hidden curriculum," and stated that it was their "enthusiasm as teachers,... their interest and concern that will make the difference in a child-centered school."

The teachers at P.S. 41 expressed confidence that they could get things done and cited Project SAIL as proof. The UFT

chapter leader reported that the teachers felt they played an integral part in shaping the school environment. "We keep on trying," said the CSIP Committee Chairperson, a fifth grade teacher.

Interpersonal Relationships

As described earlier, P.S. 41 was selected for the project because of the positive relationships known to exist between teachers and school administrators over many years. During the OREA site visits, a high level of collegiality and congeniality as well as many close personal friendships were observed between the faculty and the administrators. The teaching staff expressed trust and respect for the administration. The teachers described the administrators as supportive, receptive to their initiatives and ideas, and respectful of their professionalism. Several teachers stated that they felt they could rely on the principal and assistant principals to assist and encourage them to take responsibility, be creative, and constantly strive for the best and most effective means to teach the children. A high level of cooperation was evident. For example, the teachers willingly gave up their lunchtime to meet with school administrators because they said they knew they wouldn't be asked to do so unless it was necessary. The staff also felt that the administrators were wholeheartedly behind the new emphasis on early childhood education, worked hard to keep teachers informed about the latest educational research, and propagated positive feelings about children.

In return, the principal and both assistant principals expressed great respect for their staff's talents and professional abilities. In several interviews, they all used terms like trust, love, respect, dedication, and commitment when discussing their attitudes about the school staff and students.

Although P.S. 41 functions in a democratic fashion, the teachers know that their school is not typical. They believe that most other school principals would restrict the extent to which teachers could participate in decision-making. They said they were not frightened by the responsibility that has come with empowerment; rather they were continually stimulated and challenged. As one teacher stated, "We didn't realize how much work it was going to be... It's very gratifying when you see it working.... We know we are shaping the school and doing the best we can for the children."

ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

The principal described his role primarily as a facilitator and motivator for the school staff. After 17 years as principal at P.S. 41, he remains enthusiastic and communicates his enthusiasm to the assistant principals and teachers. Engraved on his business card is the motto, "What the mind can conceive, we can achieve."

The principal stated that his ideas regarding his role as school administrator can be expressed in a few key concepts. "Teachers require adequate preparation time to strategize, share ideas, and discuss classroom experiences. Teachers need outside

workshops and seminars in order to continue to grow and enhance their professional skills as well as keep abreast of the latest educational trends and research. When teachers have a sense of shared responsibility with the school administration and real input in policy making, they become key players in school reform, and policies have less chance of running counter to their own perceived self-interest." He stressed that he was not threatened by sharing power. "Rather than a loss of power," he maintained, "there has been a loss of authoritarianism."

Although most school policies were established through consensus, the principal has maintained responsibility for handling certain administrative matters and the overall running of the school building. For example, he stated that the various programs which operate in the early grades at P.S. 41 had to be put together within the framework of a total school philosophy. Implementation of a special project like Project SAIL had to be handled very carefully to avoid ending up with "two schools." Because so much attention was paid to Project SAIL, he worked extra hard to ensure that there were other exciting activities available to the upper grade children and teachers. He also made sure that upper grade teachers participated in managing Project SAIL to avoid fragmentation between the lower and upper grades.

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

Common Goals and Philosophy

The school administrators and teachers shared a common educational philosophy and agreed on the school's main goals.

The principal, assistant principals, teachers, and parents who were interviewed all stressed that their energies were focused on improving instruction. They also agreed that instruction should be child-centered; that is, the needs and abilities of the children in the school should drive the curriculum rather than the desire for higher scores on standardized tests.

Planning and Coordination

At P.S. 41, school administrators, the professional and paraprofessional staff, and parents worked together cooperatively to plan school policy, identify needs, set priorities, select curricula, etc. Committees were the primary vehicle for school-based planning. All committees worked independently and cooperatively. Committee members included teaching staff from all grade levels, school administrators, and parents. Either one of the two assistant principals attended almost every committee meeting and functioned as a participating member or liaison.

A school-based management team ensured that the plans and activities of the various school committees were coordinated. Members of the management team who met once a week included the school principal, the two assistant principals, the UFT chapter leader, three classroom teachers selected by the school staff, and one paraprofessional.

Comprehensive School Improvement Program (CSIP)

The staff at P.S. 41 had already had some formal experience with school-based planning and shared decision-making before the

inception of Project SAIL. In 1986, the school was one of 320 New York City elementary and intermediate/junior high schools identified in the New York State Education Department's Comprehensive Assessment Report (CAR) as being in need of improvement. CAR schools were mandated by the Chancellor's Office to participate in the Comprehensive School Improvement and Planning program (CSIP).

CSIP is a holistic approach to school improvement and planning, designed to meet the guidelines for school improvement established by the state. Each school had to establish a school-based planning committee composed of representatives of all school constituencies, including administrators, teachers, support staff, parent association members, and students. In 1986-87, the CSIP committee assessed overall school needs and developed a plan to improve education within P.S. 41 through ongoing, school-based, collaborative planning.

The CSIP initiative was in its second year at P.S. 41 when Project SAIL was instituted in 1987-88. The ungraded primary unit became the vehicle for addressing the needs of the younger children which had been identified in the CSIP plan. Planning for Project SAIL was coordinated within the overall school improvement process, and CSIP committees were used as models for establishing Project SAIL committees. In 1988-89, there were four CSIP committees.

Project SAIL Committees

During the initial Project SAIL planning retreat, teachers

organized themselves into six standing committees, each of which was responsible for planning a specific area of the project. The following committees were formed:

- The School Organization Committee was responsible for adjusting the school's schedule and design to accommodate Project SAIL.
- The Evaluation Committee worked closely with the curriculum committee to set standards and goals for each subject area.
- The Curriculum and Materials Committee developed a comprehensive curriculum for Project SAIL students and ordered basic supplies.
- The Staff Development Committee held workshops in planning individualized activities, using learning centers, and changing approaches to teaching.
- The Parental Involvement Committee held parent workshops, open houses, and other activities in order to interest more parents in Project SAIL.
- The CSIP Committee was responsible for coordinating CSIP and Project SAIL's goals.

The committees worked individually and collectively to develop the 1987-88 proposal and budget for Project SAIL. The staff continued to meet for planning purposes throughout the 1987-88 school year, every Wednesday afternoon after school and once a month on Saturday mornings from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. at the UFT headquarters in Manhattan.

At the beginning of the 1988-89 school year, Project SAIL committees met after school as they had the previous year for approximately two months. They stopped scheduling meetings outside of regular school hours, however, when it appeared that the funds to pay for the additional hours they had already worked might not be approved.

According to the UFT chapter leader, "Teacher participation in the design, implementation, and on-going evaluation of Project SAIL as well as membership on schoolwide committees has tapped and developed skills we never knew we had. The teachers say they have grown personally and professionally. There is more willingness to change even if we're not sure we're going to like the change. There is better communication and more sharing of ideas between teachers. We've learned about 'constructive arguments' and developed process and organizational skills." She believed that the project had been successful in reducing teacher isolation.

Other Special Programs

Other special programs which operated at P.S. 41 during 1988-89 included Basic School Staffing, Project Giant Step, Project Child, the Attendance Improvement Dropout Prevention (A.I.D.P.) program, the Special Educator Support program (S.E.S.P.) sponsored by the UFT, Paraprofessionals in Kindergarten, and Writing to Read (a computer-based early reading program for five- and six-year-olds sponsored by IBM). Basic School Staffing, Project Child, and A.I.D.P., which all require some school-based planning as a condition of funding, were coordinated through CSIP.

PROJECT FUNDING AND SCHOOL SYSTEM SUPPORT

Inherent in the concept of school-based planning is the belief that schools can be improved by giving professionals and

parents the flexibility to develop local solutions to local problems. To do this, ideally, schools need the approval, support, and cooperation of boards of education and must have sufficient discretionary funds to implement their ideas.

As related earlier in the report, the idea for Project SAIL was initiated in 1986 by the UFT president. The Chancellor, who had agreed to cooperate with the union in implementing the idea, retired by the time P.S. 41 began to plan for Project SAIL. The new Acting Chancellor pledged continued support for the idea and assigned a special assistant in his office to facilitate the project. The District 23 UFT District Representative and the Community Superintendent also promised their assistance. No special funds for Project SAIL were set aside, however, in either the central Board of Education or district budgets.

The UFT assigned its Educational Issues Assistant to work closely with the project and paid the expenses for the first weekend planning retreat. In May 1987, school staff submitted a proposal and budget to the central Board of Education. When the project opened in September 1987, monies for the project were provided by the central Board of Education.

In May 1988, the school staff developed a budget for the 1988-89 school year which they submitted to the central Board of Education as they had done the year before. Many of the key persons, however, who had facilitated the project's funding the previous year were no longer available when school reopened in September 1988. A new Chancellor had been appointed. The former

Chancellor's Special Assistant who had assisted the project was moved to another office. The UFT Educational Issues Assistant who had worked very closely with the project staff left the UFT and was not replaced. The school did not receive a budget allocation for 1988 from the central Board of Education until April 24, 1989. From their point of view, to make matters worse there was no promise that any funds would be available for the third year of the project.

The uncertainty about the project's status demoralized many members of the school staff. When what they believed was a three-year commitment wasn't honored in the second year, they said they "lost good faith." "The money became a symbol... we felt sold out," they explained. "We felt we were used as a tool by the UFT. They praised us but wouldn't fight for us." Other teachers said that although they felt demoralized when they didn't get paid, they were even more angered by the continual promises that everything was O.K. and that everything would be worked out. One assistant principal believes that if the central Board had rejected their budget outright, the staff would have had less of a morale problem because they simply would have planned accordingly.

The UFT President met with P.S. 41 staff at the end of May 1989 in the teachers' lunchroom. She praised the teachers for doing a wonderful job, said she was aware of their problems, and told them that she mentioned P.S. 41 in every speech she had given recently. After her talk, one of the teachers enumerated

what the staff felt were their needs for the project's third year. She answered, "We gave our all to get it started....now we are involved in many new initiatives...we don't have the resources." The UFT president suggested that the staff plan to reduce the need for additional money. "The union would like P.S. 41 to serve as a catalyst for other schools and teachers," she said, adding that it can't happen if it costs an extra $100,00 a year.* "In other words, I'm asking more of you now," she said.

The teachers, principal, and assistant principals all agreed that they had not carried out many of the things they had wanted to do during the second year because of the delayed budget. Although some project goals were accomplished, they believed that much more could have happened. According to the UFT chapter leader, "We wanted to do a tracking system but it wasn't put into effect. We wanted to put together a clearer set of goals in each subject area for each age group...a written set of goals." of

According to school administrators, the continual budget delays and ever-present bureaucratic red tape constantly frustrated their attempts to implement plans to improve their school.

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*It cost about $91,400 to pay staff for ten extra hours per month to attend planning meetings.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT SAIL

CLASS ORGANIZATION

The First Year

In 1987-88, the ungraded primary unit consisted of 24 classes of 18 to 22 children each. Classes were grouped into sets of three classes. Each set of three, called a "core", was named after a famous ship in African-American history. Within each core, the children were grouped homogeneously by skill level for reading and mathematics instruction and heterogeneously for all other curriculum areas. Core classrooms were physically adjacent to each other, and classes within each core shared the same curriculum themes, assemblies, trips, holiday activities, parties, and lunch hour.

During the first year of the project, teachers were assigned to the cores by school administrators so that each core was staffed by teachers with varying degrees of expertise and years of teaching experience. Teachers within each core practiced team-teaching. Each Project SAIL teacher was responsible for teaching reading and mathematics to the children in his or her own class and one curriculum specialty area like science, for example, to all children within the core. The teachers within each core divided responsibilities for core activities among themselves, based on their own assessments of their preferences and strengths. For instance, one core teacher would write all the newsletters that were sent home to the families of children in the core. Another core teacher would work with the children

in all three classes to prepare for an assembly program. In this way, they hoped that both the children and teachers would benefit by having access to the strengths and talents of the different teachers. Teachers within each core had the same preparation and lunch periods in order to facilitate planning, evaluation, and articulation for the core.

Each school day was divided into seven 45-minute periods (six teaching periods and one lunch period). Children moved physically from one core classroom to another to receive instruction in the curriculum specialty areas. Classes rotated within the cores four days a week. On Thursdays, classes remained in their own "homerooms" where children participated in enrichment activities and special projects. Thus, each week, the children spent approximately 20 class periods in their homerooms and five hours in each of the other two core classrooms. Although the teachers admitted that the children did not find moving from classroom to classroom difficult, the teachers themselves found the division of the curriculum and the movement of the children between classrooms hard to manage.

At the end of the first semester, three sets of teachers decided to maintain their cores as originally established, two sets of teachers restructured their cores, and six teachers from the remaining three cores continued collaborative planning within their cores but stopped the movement of children between classrooms.

The Second Year

In the second year of the project, there were 21 classes of

22 to 25 children which were organized into seven rather than eight cores. The six classes designated "five- and six-year-old classes" contained only kindergarten-aged children. The 15 remaining Project SAIL classes designated for "six- and seven year-olds, seven- and eight-year-olds, and eight- and nine-year-olds." Although these classes were made up, for the most part, of children within a two-year span, they sometimes had children who were either older or younger. For example, a class for "sevens and eights" might also contain some children who were six or nine years of age.

Each core was made up of two similar age-group classes and one class of a different age-group. For instance, the S.S. Phyllis Wheatley Core was comprised of two "five- and six year-old classes" and one "six- and seven-year-old class", while the S.S. Amistad Core had two "eight- and nine-year-old" classes and one "seven- and eight-year-old class. One core included a special education class. Another feature of this form of class organization was its flexibility. Children were not locked into a particular class. Because teachers monitored the children's progress regularly, they could be easily moved to another class for reading or mathematics instruction when it seemed beneficial.

In the second year, teachers were able to select their own core partners rather than being assigned by school administrators. The core teachers were no longer responsible for teaching a special curriculum to all classes within the core, and the children no longer moved between classrooms for instruction.

Team teaching was done on an informal basis at the discretion of the teachers in a specific core.

In addition to the classroom teachers, all the five- and six-year-old classes were assigned a full-time paraprofessional, all six- and seven-year-old classes had a half-day paraprofessional, and the seven- and eight-year-old classes had paraprofessional assistance when needed.

Some children also participated in the P.S. 41 after-school center on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:00 to 4:00 P.M., where they attended classes in music, art, games, sewing, reading enrichment, mathematics, storytelling, and cooking.

CURRICULUM

As outlined in the original plan, students in Project SAIL progressed at their own pace from levels A through D in reading, mathematics, social studies, and science; however, the class was treated as a unit in writing, music, art, physical education, and computers. Each subject had specific instructional goals and methods for evaluation. The classrooms were organized into learning centers--areas of the room which contained materials focused on particular areas of study. The learning centers enabled children to work in small groups independent of direct adult supervision. Teachers were encouraged to plan experiential activities which allowed children to learn "by doing." Curriculum subjects were taught in an integrated fashion, organized around themes chosen for their relevance and interest to the children.

In the second year of the project, the redesigned school day, achieved via the school-based option,* included common preparation periods, lunch hours and, once every three weeks, an extended block of time made up of three consecutive preparation periods plus lunch, to provide the core teachers with time for in-depth team planning, communication, and on-going evaluation. The cluster teachers supervised the children during the preparation periods.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The Staff Development Committee conducted formal and informal assessments of staff training needs and planned specific activities to address them. The overall staff development goals stated in the Project SAIL proposal were to encourage teachers' individual development, improve the school culture, and enhance teachers' instructional effectiveness.

In 1987-88, specific training was planned to help teachers increase their knowledge of child development and their use of developmentally appropriate methods of observing, recording and evaluating young children's growth. The teachers also wanted to improve their use of the writing process, a method for teaching children expressive writing, and become better informed about the relationship between early writing and beginning reading. The

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*According to the U.F.T.-Board of Education Agreement: Teachers (Sept. 1987-Sept. 1990), "The Union chapter in a school and the principal may agree to modify the existing provisions of this Agreement or Board regulations concerning class size, rotation of assignment classes, teacher schedules and/or rotation of paid coverages for the entire school year...."

bulk of staff development at the school was accomplished through "peer coaching" techniques in which the teachers trained and assisted each other in improving their knowledge and skills.

In 1988-89, two full-time school-based teacher trainers were hired. The teacher trainers, classroom teachers, and other school-based staff gave monthly workshops, demonstration lessons, and in-classroom assistance. The cluster teachers also functioned as teacher trainers and planned workshops and demonstration lessons in their areas of expertise. The principal personally supervised staff development activities in science.

The principal encouraged teachers to participate in workshops and seminars held outside of the school, and to visit other schools or programs to learn how new theories are put into practice. He facilitated this by arranging supervision of their classrooms so that teachers could attend such events during the school day. He believed this helped teachers to view themselves as professionals rather than as workers, and to grow professionally.

The Special Educator Support Program (S.E.S.P.) is a UFT-sponsored school-based staff development program established to facilitate the sharing of educational materials and ideas and to help teachers play an active role in their own professional growth. At P.S. 41, school and S.E.S.P. staff worked together to create a Staff Resource Center housing educational and reference materials as well as other resources.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Both CSIP and Project SAIL had parent involvement committees that plan workshops and other activities for parents. In addition, Project Giant Step staff at the school planned activities to involve prekindergarten parents in their children's education. A parent room was set up in 1988-89.

Philosophically, P.S. 41 school staff believed that parents should be involved in school-based planning and decision-making. There was a small, dedicated group of parents who were actively involved as members of various planning committees. These parents, according to the P.T.A. president, saw themselves as vital members of the school community whose opinions were respected by the teachers and administrators. About 31 parents regularly volunteered to assist in the classroom. They provided assistance to individual children, read stories to small groups, assisted children with cooking activities, and helped teachers decorate bulletin boards.

The school staff made many efforts to increase parental involvement but acknowledged that they had not been as successful as they would have liked. During Project Sail's first year, they sponsored a number of activities for parents, including parent teas, a Thanksgiving dinner, and other events. Activities were held in the evening as well as during the school day, but the turnout of parents was small.

CSIP made improving parental participation in school activities a major goal during 1988-89. Attendance at events sponsored for parents improved somewhat during the second year. For example, 40 to 50 mothers attended the Mother's Day Breakfast, sponsored by the Chancellor in elementary schools throughout the city.

School staff communicated with parents primarily through monthly parent newsletters that stressed the need for parents and teachers to work together toward a common goal, highlighted schoolwide as well as individual success stories, and generally kept the parents up to date on what was going on in the school. Each Project SAIL core also regularly sent newsletters home to parents describing their current themes and related activities, and encouraged parents to talk to their children about schoolwork.

P.S. 41 is located in a neighborhood plagued by drugs and crime which makes many people reluctant to come out at night. Staff said that many children live with single parents who work full-time outside the home and, as a result, have difficulty attending activities held in the school. Some staff expressed the hope that what appeared to be a lack of involvement may to some extent, have reflected the fact that parents were kept informed and were satisfied with what they know about the school.

IV. PRELIMINARY STUDENT OUTCOMES

This section discusses student outcomes at the end of Project SAIL's first year (1987-88). It also summarizes teachers' perceptions of the project and their recommendations after the first year of program implementation. Second and third grade scores on the citywide reading and mathematics tests at the end of the second year (1988-89) are also reported.

SOCIALIZATION SKILLS

To assess socialization skills, teachers completed a Child Behavior Rating Scale in February and again in June 1988. The 34-item scale was developed by ABT Associates to rate children on their social skills with peers and adults in the classroom, and their task orientation and strategies. The completed checklists were delivered to the Early Childhood Evaluation Unit for scoring and analysis.

Completed sets of rating scales were received for 391 out of 553 children enrolled in kindergarten through third grade classes. In February, the average score on the rating scale was 71.5 (S.D. = 20.5) out of a maximum of 132, and in June the average score was 83.7 (S.D. = 24.3). A comparison of the change in average teacher ratings from February to June shows a statistically significant improvement ($p>.001$) in children's social skills.

ATTENDANCE

To assess improvement, individual pupil attendance in

1986-87, the year before Project SAIL, was compared to attendance in 1987-88 for those students for whom two years of data were available. Information collected from the children's cumulative records kept in the school was available for 413 children, 249 of whom had attendance data for both years. Average attendance was 84.3 percent in 1986-87 and 86.3 percent in 1987-88. As shown in Table 1, while there was only a slight increase in overall attendance, a larger percentage of children had attendance rates greater than 90 percent in 1987-88 than in 1986-87.

TABLE 1

Attendance Rates for Project SAIL Students in 1986-87 and 1987-88

	School Year			
	1986-87		1987-88	
Attendance Rate	N	Percentage of Students	N	Percentage of Students
Less than 50%	6	2.4%	6	2.4%
51% - 60%	5	2.0	4	1.6
61% - 70%	16	6.0	11	4.4
71% - 80%	36	14.5	32	12.9
81% - 90%	93	37.3	86	34.5
More than 90%	93	37.3	110	44.2
Totals	249	100.0%	249	100.0%

While there was a slight increase in attendance at the end of the project's first year, there was still need for additional improvement.

According to aggregate attendance data submitted to the central Board of Education for the 1988-89 school year, average attendance rates for Project SAIL students remained below the Chancellor's Minimum Standard of 90 percent. The average attendance rate was 82.3 percent for kindergarten children, 82.4 percent for first grade children, 83.1 percent for second graders, and 87.0 percent for third graders

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STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Increased student achievement was not an expected outcome of the ungraded primary unit. However, since testing was required as part of Project Child in 1987-88 and the annual citywide testing program, it was decided that the children's achievement test scores would be examined as part of the program evaluation.

Kindergarten children were administered the Preprimer level of the MAT Language test as a pretest in October 1987 and the Primer level in May 1988 as a posttest. Matched pre- and posttest scores were available for 59 of the 109 kindergarten children. The mean percentile score increased from the first percentile in the fall to the 70th percentile in the spring. For these kindergarten children, the pretest was their first experience with a group-administered standardized test. As a result, the extremely low mean pretest score may have been caused by their inexperience with standardized testing formats rather than lack of knowledge. Only posttest scores were available for 109 kindergarten children. The average posttest score was

slightly above grade level at the 56th percentile. Based on the posttest score, the majority of the children finished kindergarten with the language skills needed to succeed in first grade.

The Primer and Primary I levels of the MAT Reading test were administered to first grade students in the 1987-88 school year. Matched scores were available for 78 children. The mean percentile score increased from the 30th percentile in the fall to the 47th percentile, almost at grade level, in the spring. Posttest scores only were available for 109 first grade students; they scored at the 43rd percentile. As a group, the first graders scored slightly below grade level on the reading test in the spring.

Second grade children took the Primary II level of the MAT Reading test in April 1988 as part of the citywide testing program. Scores for 134 children were obtained from central citywide test tapes. Only a quarter of the second graders scored at or above grade level in reading. Reading scores were similar for the children in the third grade, who were given the Degrees of Reading Power (D.R.P.) test in April. Mean scores obtained from central citywide test tapes indicate that 25 percent of the third graders who were tested had scores at or above grade level.

Students' scores in both reading and mathematics improved the second year of the program. The percentage of second and third grade students reading at or above grade level rose from 25 percent to 36 and 39 percent, respectively. A majority of the

third graders (70 percent) scored above the minimum competency level set by the state.

In mathematics, the improvement in test scores was more dramatic. In 1986-87, before the inception of Project SAIL, about a third of the second and third grade children had scores at or above grade level on the MAT mathematics test. In 1988-89, 54 percent of the second grade students and 68 percent of the third graders scored at or above grade level, and almost all the third graders (85 percent) scored above the state's minimum skill level in mathematics.

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROGRAM

Seventeen of the 24 Project SAIL teachers (71 percent) completed and returned the teacher questionnaires at the end of the project's first year. According to information on the questionnaires, the teachers had varying degrees of experience and expertise. More than 85 percent of the teachers had at least five years of teaching experience, and over half had taught for ten years or more. About a third of the teachers reported they had had previous experience working in experimental programs which involved team teaching.

The teachers found the first year of the program both exciting and frustrating. In general, they felt that the program had been successful in achieving its goals for children. Almost 90 percent believed that students' achievement had improved as a result of the program. A majority (82 percent) stated that they had also noticed changes in their students' attitudes toward

school and learning. They said that the children were more enthusiastic about school, displayed an eagerness to take on more challenging work, and were willing to work on extra projects. They seemed more cooperative with adults and had better relationships with other children.

While a majority of the teachers believed that the children had benefited from the program, 82 percent stated that they had encountered some problems during the first year. Most problems related to learning to work cooperatively with other teachers and/or scheduling the movement of children between classrooms within the cores.

Teachers suggested a variety of ways to improve the program. They requested help in setting up and managing small group instruction, assistance in working with children who had emotional problems or were disruptive, and specific curriculum guidelines. They also suggested that more time for planning and preparation, monthly meetings between teachers and parents, and more classroom supplies be made available.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Project SAIL is the first full-scale experiment in school-based planning and shared decision-making within the New York City public school system. The experiences of P.S. 41 teachers and administrators can be used to help guide the school system as it plans for expansion of school-based planning and shared decision-making to other public schools.

During the early part of the century, educators adopted the principles of scientific management which had revolutionalized the nation's industries, and applied them to educational administration. They hoped that the public schools would function as efficiently as the nation's factories. In the production or factory model of school organization, authority rests in the principal or in administrative offices outside of the school. The teachers are workers who carry out the decisions made by administrators. The "products"--the students--are moved along in assembly-line fashion through each grade. This basic organizational structure put in place many years ago remains, for the most part, in place today.

At present, decisions about where to place program initiatives are often made at the central Board of Education or within community school district offices. To change the situation, however, school-based planning and shared decision-making cannot simply be imposed on schools. In order to use school-based planning successfully, school principals, parents, and teachers must want to reorganize their schools, and must

understand enough about the implications of reorganization to make an informed decision to participate.

According to Rallis (1988), "Before teachers can act as instructional leaders, two conditions must exist simultaneously: 1) policy makers and administrators must establish structures and send signals that enable teachers to undertake leadership roles, and 2) teachers must become responsible professionals, willing to devote the time and energy that leadership requires, willing to be held accountable for the decisions they make, and willing to listen to one another and to accept leadership from within their ranks. Unfortunately, only a few schools exhibit both these conditions simultaneously."

Both these elements were in place before P.S. 41 was asked to implement Project SAIL. If staff in other schools decide to become involved in school-based planning and shared decision-making efforts, they should be helped to assess their own readiness to undertake new roles and responsibilities. In addition, they will probably need more extensive training and technical assistance than did the P.S. 41 faculty in order for their efforts to be successful.

In addition, the school system must make sure that schools have sufficient time to plan and implement their ideas. P.S. 41 staff attended two weekend retreats and met over a period of months to develop the initial Project SAIL proposal. Once the project was underway, the school-based committees met weekly after school and on Saturday mornings once a month throughout the

first school year to work out details, solve problems as they arose, and assess progress. School staff felt they needed to continue to meet almost as frequently during the second year in order to improve their instructional program. It should be assumed that it will take teachers, administrators, and parents several years to plan and implement especially innovative programs successfully.

The central Board of Education and/or community school district administrators must make sufficient funds available to school-based planning committees to carry out their ideas. These funds must be committed over a period of years. The first year, P.S. 41 received funds for Project SAIL through direct intervention from the Chancellor's office. No formal budget, however, was ever set aside for the project, and no mechanism was established to ensure that funds would be available for the second year. Funding was dependent on the goodwill of individual decision-makers. When these persons left, district and UFT officials were unable to intercede with the central bureaucracy on behalf of the school and negotiate a budget in a timely fashion. Staff at P.S. 41 were so committed that they continued with the project despite lack of money and lowered morale.

Finally, school-based planning and shared decision-making require that administrators revise their own assumptions about what are commonly assumed to be efficient management and supervision practices. "Leadership and support from central decision-makers are vital for success. Ideally, the district and

central offices act decisively to provide general direction, and at the same time, give sufficient technical and financial assistance to allow successful program implementation" (OREA, 1989). If school system administrators are to function differently than they have in the past, then they too must be helped to understand and accept this very different approach to educational change.

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